

# CHANGES THAT MAKE US #NOWINLIFESTYLE



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## Explaining Bangladeshi cuisine

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mutton/beef dishes using unripe jackfruits, called 'echor.' Their love for vegetables and pulses is endless, and the region is home to recipes that use sajna as well as its leaves and make different kinds of boris using white gourd.

The use of spices here is similar to Rangpur as they also use paanchphoron, jeera and radhuni, a spice, in most of their dishes.

### RANGPUR

There are two dishes that stand out from this region, 'Roshun mangsho' and 'Sholkapolka.' As the name suggests, the first one is made with pods of garlic and

The mighty Padma flows through this district, so hilsa or locally known as 'Padma'r Ilish' is consumed a lot and served in a tomato and potato sauce.

But the one dish that Nahid Osman felt had etched itself in her memories was the staple dish of kalai-ruti that is served with a mashed brinjal preparation (begun bharta; made by burning the eggplant, adding chillies and onions, and drizzled with mustard oil right before it is served) in Chapai Nawabganj.

Kalai-ruti itself is bland and does not complement chicken curries as much as it does the bharta. The blending of flavours is one that Nahid Osman described as 'heavenly'. Although the mixture for the kalai-ruti dough is readily available in the local markets of Chapai Nawabganj, its primary ingredient is rice flour and kalai daal flour with salt and water.

The ruti is then cooked in three stages on three different earthen flat stoves.

### JAMALPUR

Different kinds of eggplants are farmed and consumed in this region. In fact, people also add it to their hilsa curry dishes as well.

White eggplants are grown here that resemble tennis balls, and are cut 1-1½ inches thick and marinated for 15-20 minutes with onion, turmeric, garlic and chilli pastes, coriander, cumin, clarified butter, and mustard oil. It is then cooked by increasing and decreasing the heat and then served.

They consume a lot of fresh water fish and prawn. Interestingly, this region chooses to fry their fish first before adding it to the sauce. They love chapa shutki and even have a recipe for a shutki bharta preparation that does not include oil, just some jackfruit seeds, lau shak and potatoes that are all mixed with spices and kept in earthen pots.

Another dish includes taking chapa shutki bharta wrapped in leaves and frying those. They also make a unique set

of savoury pithas using chapa shutki, sesame seeds, bananas and the like. Chitoi pitha is given a spicy edge. Chhita-ruti, which is a specialty of the region, is almost dosa-like and made with ginger, garlic, onion and cumin paste, and served with a desi styled scrambled egg, or jhaal gosh. But nothing comes close to 'handesh,' a kind of pitha made with rice flour and beef, which almost has a halim-like consistency.

### COMILLA

Vegetables grown in this district have a unique taste, and they are widely used in a lot of dishes in the region. Fish is also very popular, which is cooked in a very thin sauce, which is also a Comilla specialty.

People of Comilla also have an affinity towards chapa shutki, making it from puti maach and burying them in earthen pots for long periods of time. According to Nahid Osman, "This form of shutki is also popular in Sylhet and Brahmanbaria, and anyone who has ever tasted this will become a lover for life!"

Shutki patori is iconic to the region. The recipe calls for chapa shutki wrapped in white gourd/taro leaves with red chillies and then fried or steamed. Food eaten here is very close to the cuisine found in Agartola.

The sweet shop Matri Bhandarhas has a 400-year-old standing reputation of having the best rasmalai nationwide.

### SYLHET

This district can be summed food wise in less than five words, 'tea and citrus fruits'. For Sylhetis, lemon is a must have and local vendors even sell puffed rice mix with chanachur and raw tea leaf bharta. They even have a separate recipe on turning raw tea leaves into a shutki.

The cuisine is very much similar to Khasiya food with a love for shutkis, kaika and fresh fish.

The different varieties of lemon found

here include shatkora, which has lemon and cardamom (elachi) tones. Ada zameer is similar to shatkora, but with a stronger cardamom aroma. Their peels are used to cook meat and fish dishes. Beef is consumed a fair bit here, with a slightly higher fat content, which complements these citrus fruits very well. Zara, which has a thick skin but sweet tone, is sometimes made into a pickle.

Binni rice is also used to make a dish called 'choongapura.' Choonga is the name of bamboo that the rice is cooked in and is served with duck, which is made with bamboo shoots. During Ramadan, Iftar is always a tehari made with chhola and eaten with peyaju.



They also have a yellow rice, which is quite fragrant.

### BIKRAMPUR AND FARIDPUR

Located on either side of Padma, these two regions, are also home to the famed Padma'r Ilish.

People here consume koi, shoil, kholla, tapashi and shagorpona, which are very expensive because of their rarity. Fish is not fried beforehand, but rather, cooked in the sauce. Chitol and foli is used to make koftas. Methi shoil is a dish that is cooked without adding any water and only thick slices of onion and fenu-greek (methi). Chitoi pitha is eaten with hilsa and a lot of 'mattha' (a buttermilk

drink). Kajeer bhaat, which is basically the small amounts of rice that are set aside when cooking rice for everyday meals is allowed to ferment for a few days and then cooked like normal rice, and served with different kinds of bhortas.

The dish is quite commonly cooked during weekend lunches, as it results in quite a good nap-post feast.

Bikrampur in general is also known for having good sweets.

### FARIDPUR AND NOAKHALI

While Faridpur is renowned for its jaggery, Noakhali loves its food hot. Kolmi-shaak with daal is a simple, yet an iconic dish of the district.

### DHAKA

For this writer, the journey finally ended with a quick but familiar visit to the capital that millions call 'home!'

Dhaka has its gastronomic roots woven tightly around Mughal influences starting from tehari, different kinds of kababs (jali, shami, shutli, and boti), mutton rezala, bakarkhani, nehari, murog musallam, chaap, to our version of biriyani, and of course 'kachhi.'

According to Nahid Osman, "Bangladeshis customised the biriyani by adding the iconic potato to it that you will not see in other versions of it."

Food is not just a representation of culture, but also a part of what makes us unique as individuals. Whatever we grow up eating becomes a part of the kind of food we end up labelling as our 'favourites', or that dish that gives us warm fuzzy feelings of being wrapped up in a blanket on a winter night.

Food not only relinquishes the mortal hunger, but etches memories into the very soul, waiting to become stories and traditions for the coming generations to grow up on.

Food prepared by: Nahid Osman

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mutton, whilst the latter uses an array of greens; leaves of different plants such as sajna, taro, bottle gourd, and a local spinach known as lafra. Chopping the leaves is an art on its own. It is cooked with rice flour and shidol shutki.

### RAJSHAHI

They take their love for sweets very seriously- in fact everything they cook has to have a sweet aftertaste to it. Rajshahi mangoes are all the rage so it should come as no surprise that it highlights itself in almost all curries during summer as well as desserts such as rice pudding.

The 'teel-er kharjas' found here have quite the reputation too.



It's finger lickin' good

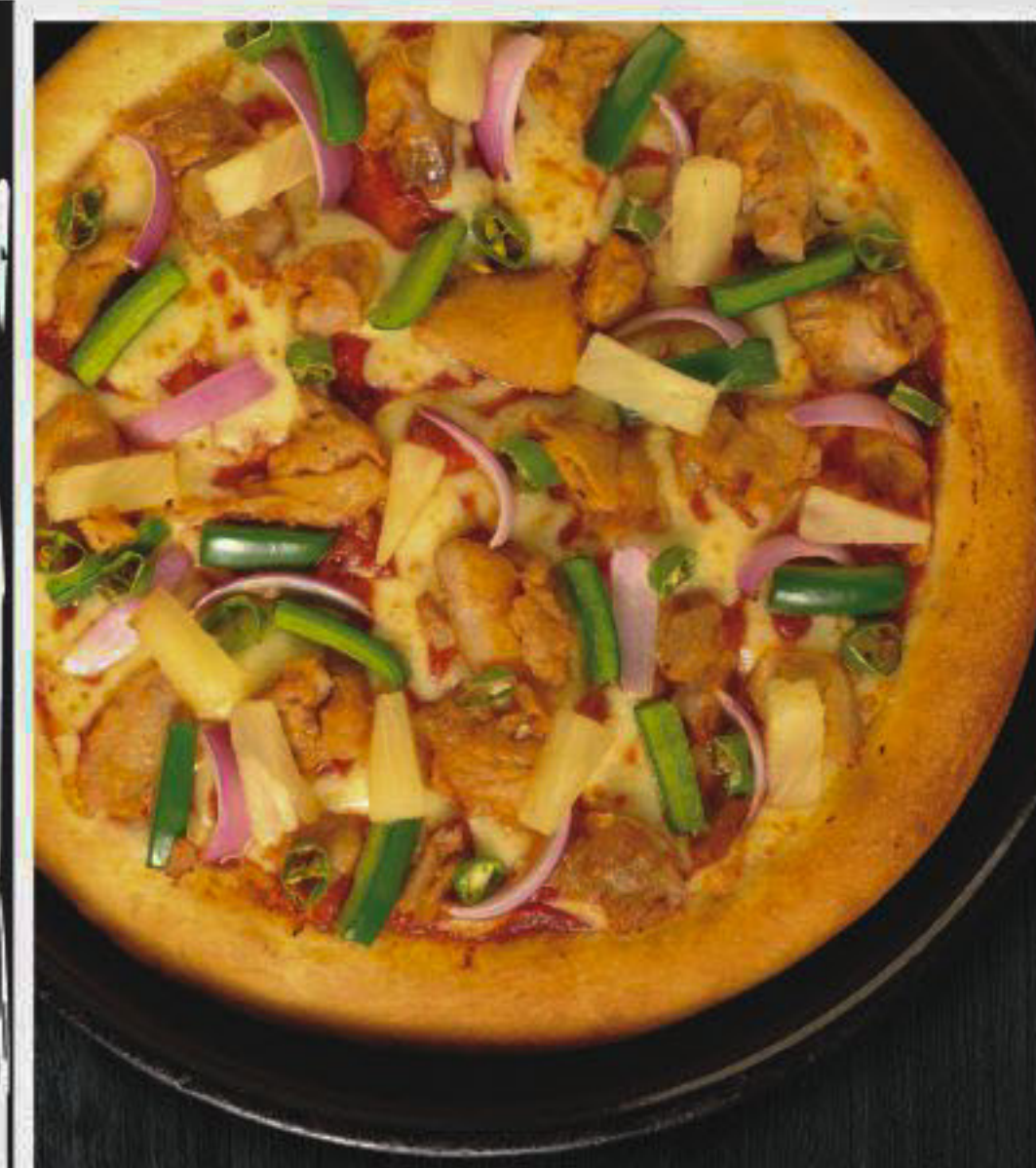
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